



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 20 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
20 MAY 1968

1. France

De Gaulle this morning is confronted with:

--a mushrooming strike which has paralyzed large areas of the country;

--student protestors as intransigent as ever;

--a censure motion in the legislature against the Pompidou government.

Strikers have occupied more than 250 factories and idled large parts of the transportation network. According to the press, the Paris police may go on strike next.

The thread which ties the workers to the students is their dissatisfaction with what Ambassador Shriver calls the "constipated bureaucracy" of the country. For the workers, this apparently includes their own labor federations. Significantly, none of the federations has called a general strike, and all seem to be trying to rein their members in.

We believe Pompidou will survive the censure motion. He may lose a few votes from the leftist fringe of the Gaullist party, but these will probably be offset by votes from conservative deputies who fear that the successor to Pompidou's government would be a leftist coalition including the Communists.

De Gaulle himself is still pulling his punches. He is not even scheduled to talk to the nation until Friday. He has a formidable arsenal of weapons to bring to bear, ranging up to the declaration of a state of emergency. His own position is not threatened, but he will need all his skill to head off the challenge to the structure he has built around himself.

2. South Vietnam

Tran Van Huong's appointment as premier will probably increase the government's following among several important civilian groups in South Vietnam, including the militant Buddhists and the people in the southern part of the country.

Ky and the generals, on the other hand, are a bit worried. [redacted]

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3. East Germany

A growing number of East Germans are saying their country should follow Czechoslovakia's lead. Some are even beginning to question the stability of the Communist world and the value of the Warsaw Pact's guarantees. [redacted]

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[redacted] Such openly expressed sentiments help explain why Ulbricht is pushing so hard for a Soviet crackdown on Prague.

4. Panama

[redacted] the winner in last Sunday's presidential elections may be declared later this week. Since Arias supporters predominate on the electoral board which performs this function, we expect that Arias' victory will be confirmed.

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The Samudio forces are now trying to subvert some of the members of the electoral board. As long as Vallarino and the National Guard support Arias, however, Samudio's prospects are pretty dim.

5. Nigeria

Federal troops have taken the airport at Port Harcourt. This was the terminal for the air shuttle which was the Biafrans' only access to the outside world. The government in Lagos had been pushing hard to capture it in order to strengthen its hand further at the peace talks which open in Uganda this week.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Mai Van Bo Interview: North Vietnam's permanent representative in Paris, Mai Van Bo, gave an interview on 16 May to a Western journalist in which he commented on Hanoi's attitude to the peace talks. The main impression given by Bo was that the North Vietnamese negotiators were not prepared to agree to reciprocal action for a full US bombing halt of the North.

Bo went on to say that Hanoi did not expect the US to stop the bombing and as a result would continue to fight in Vietnam while continuing the "deaf persons' dialogue" in Paris. In answer to the question of whether the North Vietnamese would continue to negotiate if the Americans do not stop the bombing soon, Bo said that they would continue the conversations as long as they "appeared to be useful." He added that he did not believe it would be useful to make a "symbolic gesture" to enable the Americans to save face while stopping the bombing.

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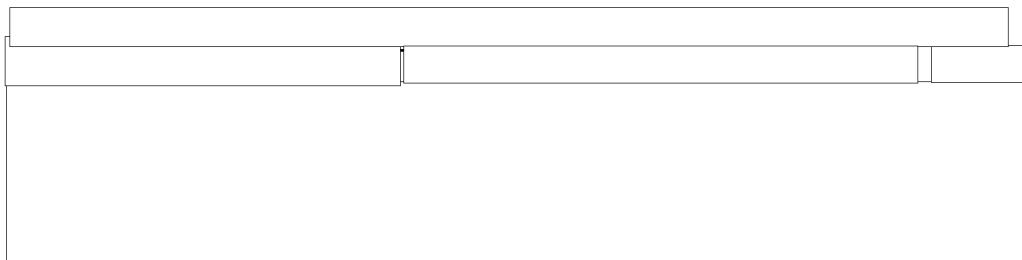
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North Vietnamese to Give Paris Reception:

Etienne Manac'h, Asian bureau chief of the French Foreign Ministry, has told a US official that the North Vietnamese are planning a large reception at a Paris hotel on 21 May. Manac'h said the French premier and foreign minister probably would not attend, but there would be high-level Foreign Ministry representation. A number of diplomats, including representatives from NATO countries, have also been invited.

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Hanoi's Delegation Settling In: Manac'h also said that the North Vietnamese delegation had asked the French to help with the installation of teletype machines and direct telephone lines from their recently acquired villa to the Majestic Hotel and North Vietnamese offices in town. The villa is one formerly occupied by French Communist leader Thorez and now owned by the French Communist Party. Manac'h indicated that everything pointed to the North Vietnamese settling down for a long stay in Paris.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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